

What will it take to get our troops out of Iraq? The roughly 70 percent of Americans who are firmly against the war often ask this question. Those in power are reluctant to give conditions, but when they do and those conditions are met, the goal post is quietly moved.

Voters were promised, passionately and vehemently, that the new Congress would bring our troops home. Many were explicitly elected in 2006 under that banner. But our troops are still overseas, funding has been increased even beyond the administration's wish list, and troop withdrawal has been negotiated away.

When things are going badly in Iraq, they say we must stay until the situation improves. When things improve, they tell us we must stay because our gains cannot be jeopardized.

We are told that we must establish a functioning democracy there, and train Iraqi armed forces so they can keep order in our absence. Iraq now has a Constitution, an elected parliament, and hundreds of thousands of security forces. The problem now is that their troops are supposedly not trained

quite well enough, and that could take many more years. Defining an adequate training level for Iraqi troops is highly nebulous and its anyone's guess when or how that criteria could be satisfied.

The latest outrage came last week. For years we heard the administration claim over and over that the Iraqi government wants us there, and is begging us to stay. On the other hand, all they had to do was ask and we would respect their wishes and leave. That also has now happened. Al-Maliki perhaps took his cue from his challenger, al-Sadr, who has been clamouring for us to leave for years. Popular opinion in Iraq now mirrors that in the United States, with about 70percent of Iraqis wishing us to leave.

At the end of the year, our Status of Forces Agreement expires. Without a new agreement and understanding with the Iraqi government regarding our presence there, we officially become occupiers.

Eventually our troops will leave Iraq. The overwhelming will of the people, in both countries, can't seem to get them out. Things going well can't get them out. Things going badly can't get them out. Iraqis telling us to leave can't get them out. Perhaps not even the UN can get them out. My hope is that it does not take the complete collapse of our financial system, but if we don't leave under any other circumstances, economic chaos is inevitable, and will make it impossible to fund the war, even through debt and inflation.

We have been financing this war through inflation, and attempting to paper over reality with misleading economic indicators. The government has changed the methodology of calculating things like CPI and GDP to hide the bad news. They won't even publish M3, the total money supply statistic anymore. But reality is hitting the American people at gas pumps and grocery stores, sending more Americans into foreclosure and unemployment lines. More are hurting while Washington keeps forgetting its promises. Eventually, this will all come to a head.

Perhaps an even greater fear is that even if our financial trouble doesn't get our troops out of Iraq, moving them over to fight a new war in Iran, will. Washington should be crystal clear on this very important point – just getting the troops out of Iraq means nothing. Bringing them HOME means everything, and that is what the people in both countries demand.

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